



Immigrant Visa Issuance Pause Affecting Nationals from 75 Countries: What Applicants Need to Know

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The U.S. Department of State has announced that it will temporarily pause the issuance of immigrant visas for nationals of 75 countries beginning later this month. This update introduces new uncertainty for affected applicants and is set to take effect on **January 21, 2026**.

According to the Department of State, the pause is part of an ongoing review of policies, regulations, and guidance aimed at ensuring that immigrants entering the United States are financially self-sufficient and do not become a public charge.

What Is Changing?

Effective January 21, 2026, the Department of State will pause the issuance of immigrant visas to applicants who are nationals of the designated countries listed in the Department's guidance.

Importantly, this pause applies **only to immigrant visa issuance**, not to the submission of immigrant visa applications or the scheduling and attendance of immigrant visa interviews.

Who Is Affected?

The pause applies to immigrant visa applicants who are nationals of the following designated countries:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burma,

Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, The Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Republic of the Congo, Russia, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

Applicants from these countries may continue to proceed through the immigrant visa process; however, **no immigrant visas will be issued during the pause unless an exception applies. In other words, they can start and move through the immigration process, but they cannot complete the final step (immigrant visa issuance) at this time.**

What Has *Not* Changed

Despite the breadth of this announcement, several key aspects of the immigrant visa process remain unchanged:

- Immigrant visa interviews will continue to be scheduled and conducted.
- Applications may still be submitted and processed up to the point of final issuance.
- Previously issued immigrant visas have not been revoked as a result of this guidance.
- Nonimmigrant (temporary) visas, including tourist visas student visas, or visas for individuals traveling to the United States to attend sporting events are not affected by this.

Are There Any Exceptions?

Yes. The Department of State has confirmed an important exception:

- **Dual nationals** who apply using a valid passport from a country not included on the list are exempt from the pause and may still be issued an immigrant visa.

Determining whether this exception applies requires careful analysis of nationality, passport usage, and application history.

Practical Implications for Applicants and Petitioners

For affected applicants and their U.S. sponsors, this pause creates several practical considerations:

- **Timing uncertainty:** Even applicants who are otherwise fully documentarily qualified may face extended delays.
- **Strategic planning concerns:** Life planning, relocation timelines, and employment or family reunification expectations may need to be adjusted.
- **Increased importance of documentation:** Financial sponsorship, affidavit of support issues, and public charge considerations are likely to receive heightened scrutiny once issuance resumes.

Because interviews may still proceed, applicants should be prepared for potentially significant gaps between interview completion and final visa issuance.

Why Early Legal Guidance Matters

As with other recent immigration policy shifts, this announcement highlights how quickly the immigration landscape can change—and how important proactive planning has become.

Individualized legal counsel can help applicants and sponsors:

- Assess whether an exception may apply
- Evaluate risks associated with timing and travel
- Prepare for heightened financial scrutiny
- Explore alternative immigration strategies where appropriate

Our firm continues to monitor developments closely and advises affected applicants and petitioners to seek tailored guidance to navigate this evolving environment.

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